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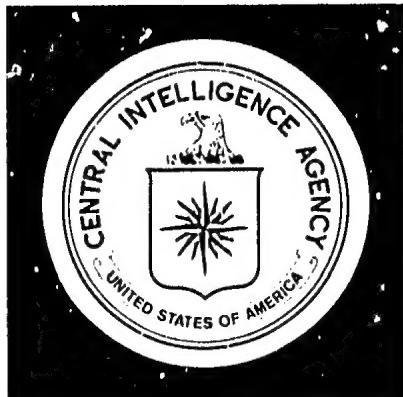
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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

Developments in Indochina

State Dept. review completed

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DEVELOPMENTS IN INDOCHINA

(Information as of 1500)

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SOUTH VIETNAM

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The Communists are firmly resisting efforts to dislodge them from the Sa Huynh area. Several prominent Saigon politicians and some of the press are criticizing the cease-fire.

LAOS

3

Government troops have reoccupied Paksong and are holding their ground west of Muong Phalane.

CAMBODIA

4

Government forces trying to retake positions on the east bank of the Mekong and reopen Route 1 are stalled. In Tam returns to the government as special counselor to the President

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SOUTH VIETNAM

There has been no appreciable change in the military situation in South Vietnam. Both sides are continuing harassing actions in widely scattered areas. Communist units in southern Quang Ngai Province are still firmly resisting South Vietnamese efforts to dislodge them from the Sa Huynh area. The government troops are being reinforced from other regions, and the South Vietnamese commander for the five northern provinces has given the 2nd Division seven days to clear Route 1 to the south and to retake Sa Huynh.

South Vietnamese "security operations" have opened several additional roads in the highland provinces. In the provinces ringing Saigon, government forces now appear to be largely in a defensive posture. The commander of Military Region 3 has reportedly decided that reconstruction of war-damaged communities and consolidation of the people's support is more important than retaking land held by the Communists. In the delta, the commander of Military Region 4 reportedly is concerned about keeping government officials operating at the fairly high rate of efficiency they showed just after the cease-fire. With enemy pressure easing, local officials are said to be slipping back to their normal routines, and are now heavily engaged in preparing their year-end reports.

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South Vietnamese Attitudes Toward the Cease-Fire

Several pro-government and opposition political figures are pessimistic about the terms of the cease-fire and the continued fighting. Pro-government Senator Le Van Dong told the US Embassy that many South Vietnamese regard the agreement as a "defeat"

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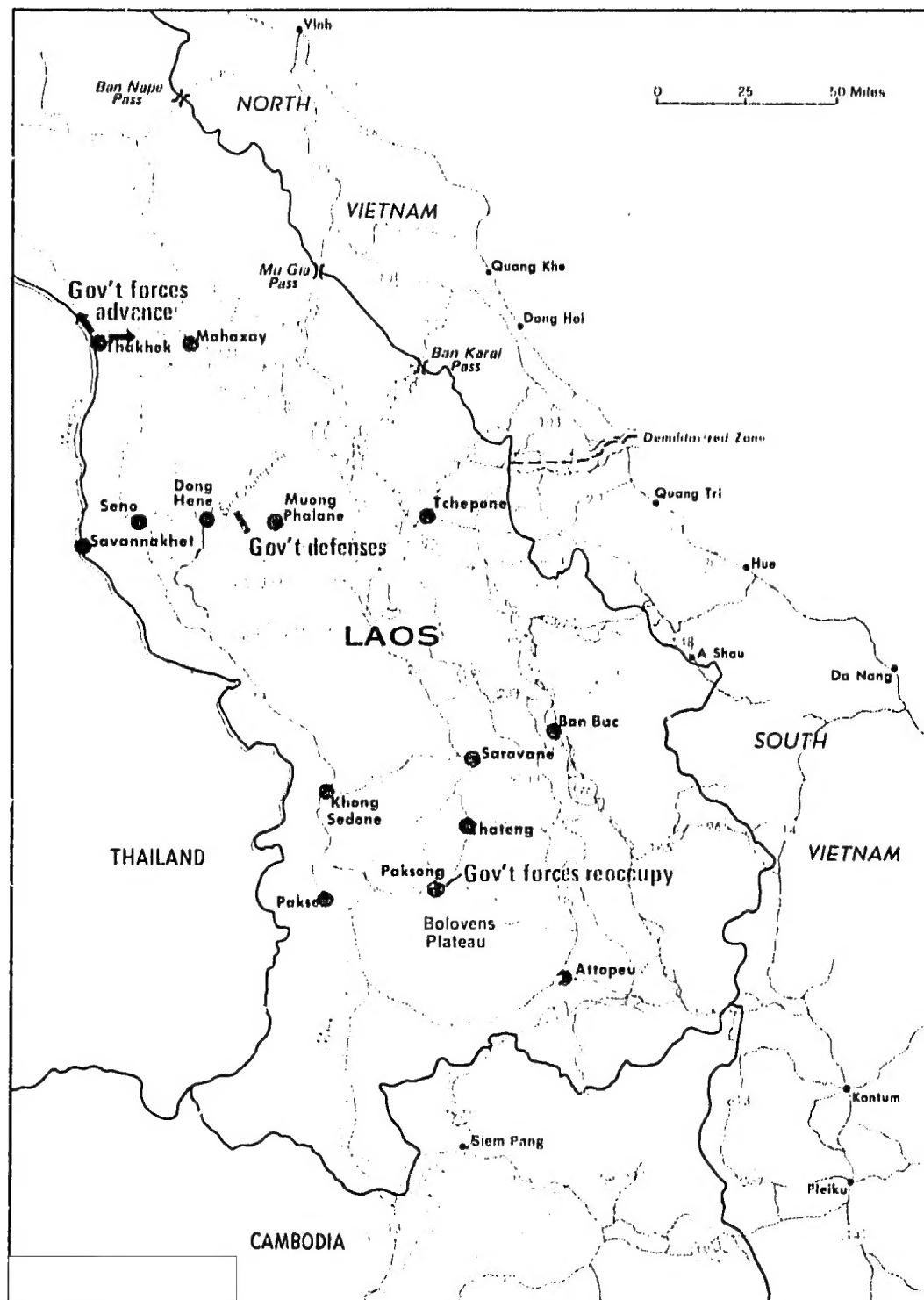
and characterized the mood among some of his Senate colleagues as susceptible to a "psychology of defeat." The senator cited as one depressing factor a widespread feeling that public opinion in the US, and in the West generally, is unsympathetic toward the Saigon government.

Tran Van Tuyen, an opposition leader in the Lower House, wrote in the Saigon press over the weekend that while the cease-fire agreement has brought peace to North Vietnam, it has not really changed the situation in the South. Tuyen noted that the fighting and casualties continue and that North Vietnamese troops remain. He observed that past experience offers little hope that the Communists will abandon their goal of uniting Vietnam under their banner and expressed doubt that the great powers will guarantee the peace. Another opposition politician, Nguyen Ngoc Huy, told the US Embassy that while he believes the Soviet Union is interested in making the agreement work, he is unsure about the Chinese.

Some Saigon papers are also concerned over the agreement. One opposition journal states that although it clearly constitutes a victory for the US, the agreement is less satisfactory for South Vietnam. Other papers question the strength of the non-Communists in a political struggle with the Viet Cong and call for greater political unity.

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● Government-held location ● Communist-held location

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LAOS

Government irregulars met little opposition on 12 February as they reoccupied most of Paksong on the Bolovens Plateau.

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Heavy air strikes apparently forced North Vietnamese troops from the 9th Regiment to pull back into the jungle.

In the central panhandle, small units continue to probe government defenses three miles west of Muong Phalane, but the North Vietnamese have made no serious attempt to drive off the irregulars. To the north, a Lao Army task force is pushing cautiously up Route 13 from Thakhek in an effort to reopen the road.

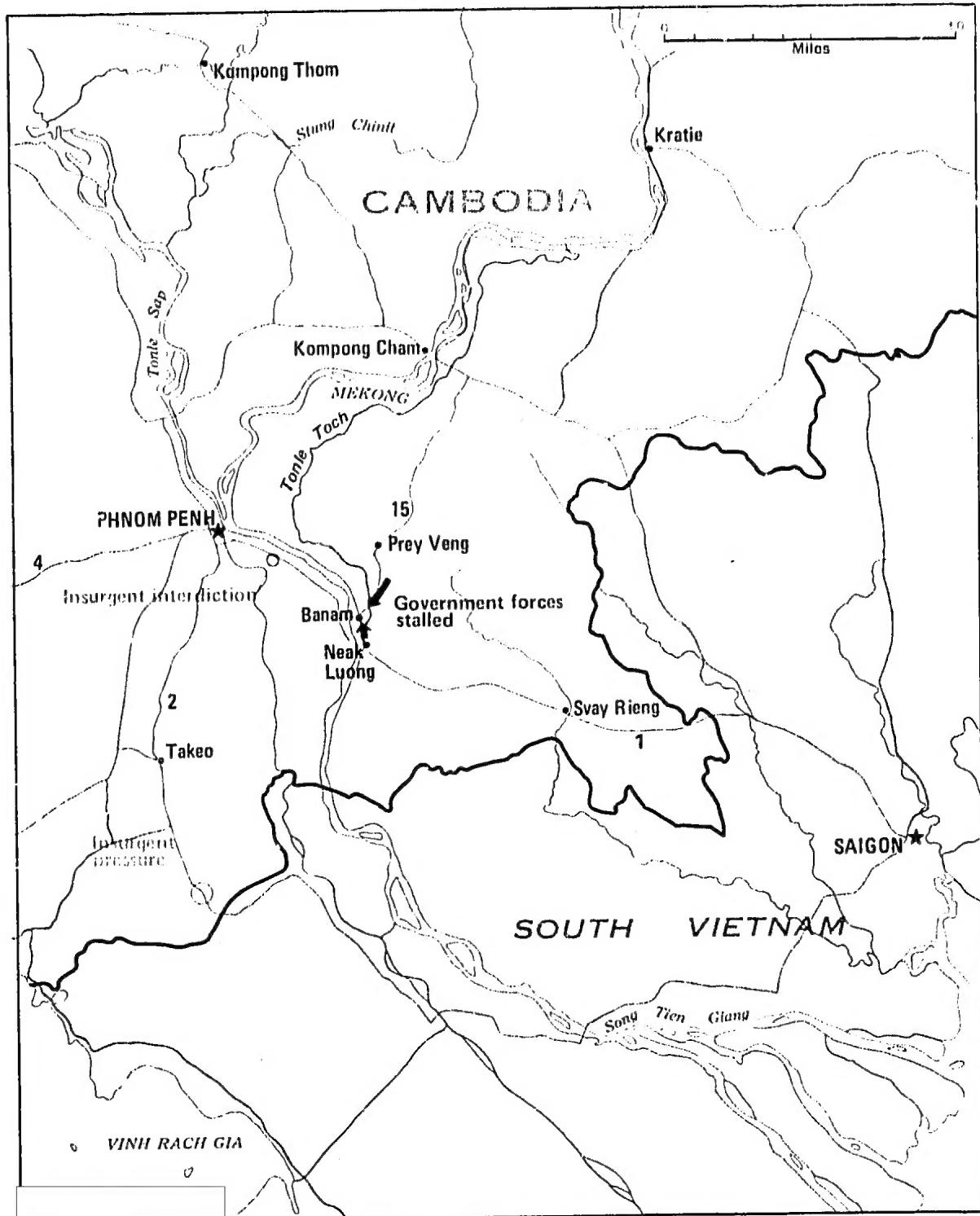
at least three North Vietnamese infantry battalions plus some Pathet Lao units are north of Thakhek. Lead elements of another government force--spearheaded by four crack irregular battalions--moving east from Thakhek, have advanced to within 15 miles of Mahaxay, an important Pathet Lao administrative center. Mahaxay has been under enemy control for over ten years, and the Communists are sure to offer strong resistance to any government effort to seize the town.

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CAMBODIA

Government forces trying to retake Banam on the east bank of the Mekong have been stalled temporarily by Khmer insurgent resistance. Four Cambodian battalions advancing up Route 15 from Neak Luong managed to move within a mile of the village on 11 February before being stopped. Another government battalion attempting to reach Banam from the north has not been able to cross the Tonle Toch River. Some of the troops from the two battalions cut off in Banam on 10 February reportedly have made their way back to friendly lines in small groups. Meanwhile, the army high command is replacing the local commander in charge of the Neak Luong - Banam sector--apparently because of his poor handling of the present situation.

On the west side of the Mekong, the government evidently is also making little headway in reopening a short stretch of Route 1 between Phnom Penh and the river. Thus far, only two Cambodian battalions have been assigned to that task, and it is not yet clear whether they are yet on the move.

In the south, three government battalions from Phnom Penh have moved down Route 2 to Takeo. These forces are to be used to clear several sections of Route 2 between Takeo and the South Vietnam border that have been closed by another round of insurgent harassing attacks.

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In Tam Back In

The government has announced that former Democratic Party chief In Tam has been named a "special counselor of the President," with the rank, prerogatives, and salary of a prime minister. In Tam's new

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position gives him equal status with Lon Nol's other counselors, Republican Party leader Sirik Matak and former first minister Son Ngoc Thanh.

[redacted] In Tam wanted to be "adviser for concord," and [redacted] he specifically wanted no mention of "rallying" in his title--probably to make sure that he did not come into political conflict with Brigadier General Lon Non, who is in charge of the rallier program. The nebulous nature of his title provides few clues as to just what his responsibilities will be. Still, his return to the government in even a limited capacity following a long period of opposition to Lon Nol is an encouraging development. [redacted]

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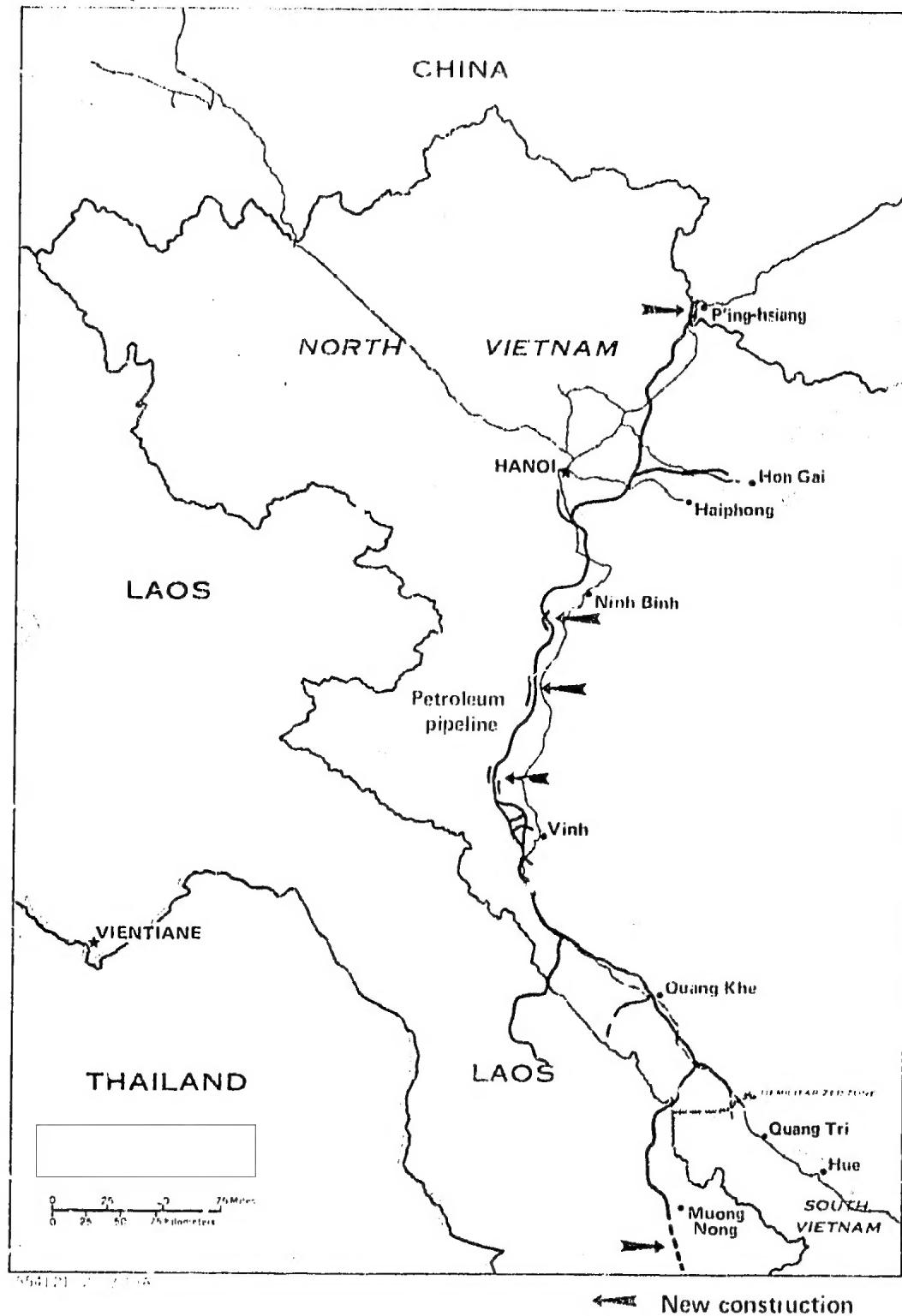
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New Pipeline Construction



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